



**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
BEAUMONT DIVISION**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

§

VS.

§

CASE NO. 1:01-CR-89

ROBERT JEROME STERNS

§

§

**FINDINGS OF FACT AND RECOMMENDATION ON PLEA OF TRUE
BEFORE THE UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b) and the Local Rules for the District Court, Eastern District of Texas, the District Court referred this matter for hearing and the submission of findings of fact and a report and recommendation pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §§ 3401(i) and 3583(e). The United States alleges that the defendant, Robert Jerome Sterns, violated conditions of supervised release imposed by United States District Judge Howell Cobb. The United States Probation Office filed its *First Amended Petition for Warrant or Summons for Offender Under Supervision* (doc. #53) requesting the revocation of the defendant's supervised release. The Court conducted a hearing on February 2, 2017, in accordance with Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure 11, 32 and 32.1. The defendant was present and represented by counsel at the hearing. Having heard the evidence, this court factually finds that the defendant has violated conditions of supervision and recommends that such violation warrants the revocation of his supervised release.

After conducting the proceeding in the form and manner prescribed by Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 11, the Court finds:

- a. That the defendant, after consultation with counsel of record, has knowingly, freely and voluntarily consented to the administration of the plea of true in this cause by a United States Magistrate Judge subject to a final approval and imposition of sentence by the District Court.
- b. That the defendant is fully competent and capable of entering an informed plea, that the defendant is aware of the nature of the charges and the consequences of the plea, that his plea of true is a knowing and voluntary plea, not the result of force or threats, and that the plea is supported by an independent evidentiary basis in fact establishing each of the essential elements of the conduct.

STATEMENT OF REASONS

A. Procedural History

Judge Cobb sentenced Mr. Sterns on May 8, 2002, after he pled guilty to the offense of felon in possession, a Class C Felony. The Defendant was subsequently sentenced to 151 months imprisonment followed by 5 years supervised release subject to the standard conditions of release, plus special conditions to include a \$200 special assessment and not to commit any offenses against a foreign state or nation. Judge Cobb has since passed away and the case was reassigned to Chief United States District Judge Ron Clark on December 28, 2007. On May 26, 2008, the Court entered an order reducing Mr. Sterns' sentence to 121 months imprisonment.

B. Allegations in Petition

The United States Probation Office alleges that Mr. Sterns violated a standard condition of his term of supervised release as follows:

The defendant shall refrain from any unlawful use of a controlled substance. The defendant shall submit to one drug test within 15 days of release from imprisonment or placement on probation and at least two periodic drug tests thereafter, as directed by the probation officer.

Specifically, Robert Jerome Sterns submitted a urine specimen on August 12, 2011, which tested positive for marijuana.

C. Evidence presented at Hearing:

At the hearing, the Government offered the following evidence in support of the allegations in the petition to revoke. The Government submitted, in exhibit form, documentation establishing that on August 12, 2011, Mr. Sterns submitted a urine specimen for testing. The drug test report for that specimen shows that it yielded a positive test result for marijuana.

Defendant, Robert Jerome Sterns, offered a plea of true to the allegations. Specifically, he agreed with the evidence summarized above and pled true to the allegation that used marijuana in violation of his supervision conditions.

D. Sentencing Guidelines; Findings and Recommended Disposition

The allegations, supporting evidence and plea of true warrant revocation of supervised release. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3583(h). The Court factually finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the defendant violated a standard condition of his supervision by using marijuana. This conduct constitutes a Grade C violation under U.S.S.G. § 7B1.3(a)(2). Upon finding a Grade C violation, the Court may revoke the defendant's supervised release. *See* U.S.S.G. § 7B1.3(a)(2).

Based upon the Defendant's criminal history category of IV and the Grade C violation, the sentencing guidelines suggest a sentence of imprisonment for a period ranging from 12 to 18

months. *See U.S.S.G. § 7B1.4(a)*. Because the original offense of conviction was a Class C felony, the statutory maximum imprisonment term upon revocation is two (2) years. *See 18 U.S.C. § 3583(e)(3)*.

The Fifth Circuit states that Chapter 7 of the Sentencing Guidelines regarding the revocation of supervised release is advisory only. *See United States v. Cade*, 279 F.3d 265, 271 n.2 (5th Cir. 2002) (citing *United States v. Montez*, 952 F.2d 854, 859 (5th Cir. 1992); *United States v. Headrick*, 963 F.2d 777, 782 (5th Cir. 1992)). Because Chapter 7 was promulgated as an advisory policy statement and there are no applicable guidelines for sentencing after revocation of supervised release¹, the Court may impose a greater or lesser sentence upon revocation. *United States v. Gonzalez*, 250 F.3d 923, 925 (5th Cir. 2001). Further, a sentence imposed for revocation will be upheld unless it is in violation of the law or plainly unreasonable. *Id.* *See also United States v. Pena*, 125 F.3d 285, 288 (5th Cir. 1997) (citations omitted).

Here, the evidence and the defendant's own admission supports a finding that the defendant violated his supervision conditions. Mr. Sterns pled true, agreed with the Court's recommended sentence for that violation, and waived his right to allocute before the District Court.

Accordingly, based upon the defendant's plea of true, the agreement of the parties, and the evidence presented in this case, it is the recommendation of the undersigned United States Magistrate Judge that the District Court accept the plea of true and revoke Defendant's supervised release. The undersigned magistrate judge recommends that the District Court order Defendant to serve a term of **twelve (12) months** imprisonment, with no additional term of supervised release.

¹ *See U.S. Sentencing Guidelines Manual*, Ch. 7, pt. A, cmt. 1 ("At this time, the Commission has chosen to promulgate policy statements only.")

OBJECTIONS

Objections must be: (1) specific, (2) in writing, and (3) served and filed within fourteen (14) days after being served with a copy of this report. *See 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)*. A party's failure to object bars that party from: (1) entitlement to *de novo* review by a district judge of proposed findings and recommendations, *see Rodriguez v. Bowen*, 857 F.2d 275, 276-77 (5th Cir. 1988), and (2) appellate review, except on grounds of plain error of unobjected-to factual findings and legal conclusions accepted by the district court, *see Douglass v. United Servs. Auto. Ass'n.*, 79 F.3d 1415, 1417 (5th Cir. 1996) (en banc). The constitutional safeguards afforded by Congress and the courts require that, when a party takes advantage of his right to object to a magistrate's findings or recommendation, a district judge must exercise its nondelegable authority by considering the actual evidence and not merely by reviewing and blindly adopting the magistrate judge's report and recommendation. *See Hernandez v. Estelle*, 711 F.2d 619, 620 (5th Cir. 1983); *United States v. Elsoffer*, 644 F.2d 357, 359 (5th Cir. 1981) (per curiam).

SIGNED this the 3rd day of February, 2017.



KEITH F. GIBLIN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE